



# Choosing and Managing Professional Development Providers

## Why go this route?

- Because sometimes increased student achievement depends on bringing fresh research, knowledge or skills into the learning community.
- Because “fresh eyes” may help the learning community re-assess its own needs and choice of strategies for improving student outcomes.
- Because when we hire outside “experts,” it’s important to focus our time with them toward bringing their expertise to bear on OUR situation.

## You’ll know you’ve arrived when...

- Professional development work is based on school data and not “vendor du jour” whims.
- Faculty plans professional development and staff meeting times so that the two are linked.
- Providers have structured their time in response to the school’s expressed needs, rather than presenting their “canned” material.
- Intelligent follow-up has been planned to ensure that faculty gets practice and feedback when staff members begin to use the new framework, skill or knowledge.
- Faculty focus shifts, based on information from the expert’s session.
- Ongoing feedback on staff’s practice of its new learning is part of the school’s plan for buying and using the expert.

## Construction Zone

Getting an outside expert to provide professional development works best when staff has been involved in the choice to do so. Consider asking your Professional Development Committee to do this selection and management work for you.

## It’s about TIME


- Needs analysis may already have been part of the School Improvement Plan process. If not, this may take 1-3 days.
- Prioritizing and clarifying steps might need a 1-hour Professional Development Committee meeting.
- Identifying a pool of providers will take 1-2 hours on the phone.
- Interviewing three providers could take an hour each.
- Agreeing with your finalist about services to expect and documenting those services will take another 1-2 hours.

## Potential COSTS

- Expert fees vary from \$100 to \$3,000 per day.
- Snacks at \$3/participant or meals at \$6–10/participant.
- Materials and copies as needed.

## The Process

*A step-by-step guide to hiring outside “experts” for professional development*

**NOTE:** Steps marked with a  are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

- 1 Look at available data** to assess your professional development needs, based on desired student outcomes.

Your School Improvement Plan should include this analysis. If not, MI-Plan (Michigan’s web-based, data-driven planning tool) can help you organize data available to you. Your school has an access password, and you can use it at [www.http://071mwb02.state.mi.us/miplan](http://071mwb02.state.mi.us/miplan).

- 2 Reflect together on what has worked well** in your experience with professional development.

INSERT A for Step 2 offers some questions for reflection, and INSERT B suggests five categories to consider.

- 3 Prioritize the professional development needs** that grow from your improvement plan.

Take this step very seriously. It deserves more than just checking which topics are most popular. INSERT for Step 3 suggests a worksheet to help you weigh and rank your “shopping list”.

- 4 Clarify what you’re looking for.** Determine what type of consultant you’re in the market for. Do you want a SPECIALIST or a COACH?

SPECIALISTS come prepared to teach a particular approach, skill or tool. They do relatively short-term work when you know what you want to learn. On the other hand, COACHES or partners engage for longer periods of time, and work with you to help determine what the best approach, tool or strategy might be. The two may not always distinguish themselves clearly, but if YOU’RE clear about your need, you can ask for what you want. INSERT for Step 4 offers a checklist to help you analyze your situation.

- 5 Compile a list of providers** that fit your need.

The back page of this wrapper lists “Resources,” including several Michigan associations. They should be able to help you expand the pool of people you’re considering. Identify 2 or 3 who come with solid recommendations from others who have watched them work.

- 6 Brainstorm a list of questions** you need answered.

INSERT for Step 6 is a “starter set” for you to adapt, based on your situation.

- 7 Use a phone interview** to develop a shared understanding of your situation and ask for a proposal based on that information.

More than one set of ears is helpful, so consider including a district resource person or your school improvement team leader in these conversations. Ask for proposals that cost out separate elements, so that you can select or reject them independently.

- 8 Review and rank proposals.**

INSERT for Step 8 is a beginning matrix for scoring proposals. Add your own criteria and share the decision with other reviewers who bring their own scoring sheets to the discussion. Differing impressions are especially useful, as they help surface assumptions and check what “evidence” led you to different conclusions.

- 9 Negotiate conditions** of work for the provider you’ve selected, and document them in a letter.

This workplan may become part of a formal contract executed by the district... or, if it’s an amount small enough to be within your building’s discretionary budget, it may serve as your agreement with the provider. INSERT for Step 9 is a sample letter.

## Getting more mileage from hiring an “expert” for professional development

*How choosing and managing a contract provider benefits your school in regard to the following initiatives:*

### **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

- Requirements for schools which do not make Adequate Yearly Progress can (in some stages) involve a requirement to hire “outside technical support” as part of corrective action. The process in this packet can help ensure those outside resource people align with your school’s intention and focus.

### **MI-Plan**

- Step 6 (pages 36,37, 48, 49 and 50) *Professional Development Calendar and Evaluation*. This part of MI-Plan offers a calendar to align yearly staff development plans with the school’s action plan. Included in this process is thinking about dates, activities, related skills, person responsible, costs, timeline and sources of funds. A rubric for evaluating professional development is also included.



---

## Resources

### Books

#### ***Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals***

**Dennis Sparks. National Staff Development Council.**

Dr. Sparks was Executive Director of NSDC for 16 years, and in tribute to his far-seeing vision, NSDC has chosen to publish his new book in on-line format. You can download the entire book for free (after a required registration form) at this address:

<http://www.nsd.org/library/leaders/sparksbook.cfm>

### People

#### **Specialists**

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on professional development in their service areas.

#### **Coaches**

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are active in working with professional development in Michigan schools. Please visit:

[www.abcscoaches.org](http://www.abcscoaches.org)

#### **Primary Author for this MI-Map Packet**

Darryl Robbins  
Partner Educator  
Office of School Improvement

#### **MI-Map Coordinator & Editor**

Joann Neuroth  
Changing Horses  
[neurothj@aol.com](mailto:neurothj@aol.com)

#### **For more information, contact**

Office of School Improvement  
Michigan Department of Education  
517/241-4285

### More People

Sources below may be able to help you broaden the pools from which you'll select possible providers:

#### **Michigan Staff Development Council**

616/375-1971

#### **Michigan Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development**

517/327-9259

517/327-0771 FAX

#### **Your District Professional Development Office**

#### **Your ISD or RESA Instructional Services Office**

#### **Principals or Teacher Leaders of other schools like you**

---

#### **Michigan State Board of Education**

Kathleen N. Straus, President  
Herbert S. Moyer, Vice President  
Carolyn L. Curtin, Secretary  
John C. Austin, Treasurer  
Marianne Yared McGuire, NASBE Delegate  
Elizabeth W. Bauer  
Reginald M. Turner  
Eileen Lappin Weiser

#### **Ex-Officio**

Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor  
Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Superintendent of Public Instruction

#### **Compliance With Federal Law**

The Michigan Department of Education complies with all Federal laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination, and with all requirements and regulations of the U.S. Department of Education.